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Archaeologist to Discuss Dominican Submerged Caverns on Feb. 24 at Cal Poly

SAN LUIS OBISPO — Archaeologist John Foster will present “Touching the Taino Underworld: Archaeological Explorations of Submerged Caverns in the Dominican Republic” at 7 p.m. Feb. 24, in Room 112 of the Business Building (No. 3), on campus.

Foster will talk about Christopher Columbus’ encounter with the Taino Indians during Columbus’ exploration of the Caribbean.

Within a few decades, Taino language and culture were destroyed as a result of conquest, slavery and disease, with only a few details of their existence remaining. Brief Spanish accounts and discoveries in caverns and caves have shed light on Taino spiritual beliefs.

Since 1993, Foster has worked as an adjunct faculty member at Indiana University, teaching and assisting in that institution’s archaeological research in the Dominican Republic, where they explored flooded Taino caverns, documented rock art caves, and created underwater parks.

The archaeologists documented the first known Taino carved wooden stool or “duho,” found at a depth of 120 feet in an underground lake. It is one of only 118 known artifacts of its type in the Caribbean.

Foster will discuss the archaeological efforts occurring in the Dominican Republic and the discovery of elaborate rock art deep within the country’s limestone caves that is believed to depict central elements of Taino cosmology, world renewal and origins.

Foster is a retired senior state archaeologist with the Archaeology, History and Museum Division of the California Department of Parks and Recreation. He also served as the state underwater archaeologist for California from 1979 to 2005. During that time, he was responsible for documenting shipwrecks and other submerged sites throughout the state’s underwater parks. He has also explored the coasts in Baja California and Mexico.

He earned a bachelor’s degree in anthropology from UCLA and a master’s degree from Long Beach State.

The Cal Poly Social Sciences Department will host the free, public event.

Links

- Social Sciences Department: <http://cla.calpoly.edu/socs.html>
- College of Liberal Arts: <http://cla.calpoly.edu>

About the Cal Poly Social Sciences Department

At Cal Poly, the Social Sciences Department focuses on practical training and critical thinking skills. The department offers degrees in anthropology-geography and sociology, with the opportunity to concentrate in a specific focus area. Students are

encouraged to apply classroom knowledge to real world experiences through internships, study abroad opportunities, service learning, and senior projects.

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